

Do Bahá'ís Believe in the Afterlife?

Without remembering, we have all made a journey from heaven to the earth, and now we are on the way back home.

All men have proceeded from God and unto Him shall all return. All shall appear before Him for judgment.¹ The Báb

The dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. Ecclesiastes 12:7

O Lord, my soul shall live with thee; do thou give my spirit rest. Isaiah 38:16

It is so easy to forget that we are travelers on a long journey, paying only a brief visit to the earth. It is so easy to forget that we are passengers on a spacecraft, that we have a chance to revolve around the sun a few times and then we must leave. We often get so attached to the spacecraft we don't want to go home. We should leave this world in the same spirit in which we arrived. When we came, we did not say "why or nay." Why should we complain when we are leaving for a better world?

Therefore it behooveth you to return unto God even as ye were brought

forth into existence, and to utter not such words as why or nay, if ye wish your creation to yield fruit at the time of your return.² The Báb

Our Creator, in expectation of our return to heaven, has prepared magnificent mansions with grand banquet halls. He wants us to get ready, to become pure, radiant, and fragrant. No one with a bad odor or sweaty clothes can enter the banquet. Its gates are quite sensitive to pollution; they simply do not open. Imagine if people with all kinds of odors and baggage entered the banquet! Then heaven would become as chaotic and polluted as the earth.

What happens to those who fail to prepare themselves for the banquet?

Those who were ready went in with him to the wedding hall, and the door was closed. The other bridesmaids arrived later. "Lord, Lord," they said, "open the door for us," But he replied, "I tell you solemnly, I do not know you."

Christ (Matt. 25:10-12)

Many of us lose hope and faith and can't see a reason for going through this life. Others can't wait; they want their rewards instantly. But our Creator asks us to be patient and faithful, and to keep reminding ourselves that the best is yet to come. "Art Linkletter told the children that 'life begins at forty' and asked the children if that were true. One little lad said: 'Life begins at three for me.' 'How's that?'

Linkletter asked. 'Well, three is when school lets me out.'"

Those who have had near-death visions often report traveling through a dark tunnel, and then reaching the light. The tunnel symbolizes this life, the light the next life. To reach our destination, we must go through the tunnel, we must complete the journey—experience sickness, pain, and death. "A little girl went to a doctor for a checkup and noticed the picture of an angel on the wall. 'What's that for?' the girl asked. 'That reminds me that someday I will go to heaven,' the doctor replied. 'Wouldn't you like to go to heaven?' 'Sure,' the girl answered. 'Well, what do you think we must do to get there?' the doctor asked. 'We must die first.' 'That's right,' the doctor smiled, 'but what must we do before that?' The girl pondered and then said, 'We must get sick and send for you!'"

Heaven is blessed with perfect rest, but the blessing of the earth is toil.

While in this world, we have a choice to focus either on the light or on the tunnel. Only by looking up to the light does living and traveling in the tunnel make any sense. Only little children who die enjoy the privilege of getting to the light without going through the tunnel. And only our lack of faith and attachment to the world prevents us from recognizing this.

The awareness of our immortality keeps us from apathy, pessimism, and

despair; or apathy, pessimism, and despair keep us from the awareness of our immortality.

Bahá'u'lláh teaches that the worlds of God are infinite, and that this life is the first stage among the infinite stages of our spiritual development. The transition from this life to the next does not result in the loss of any of our spiritual powers: our intelligence, our individuality, and the memory of our lives here. In fact, it results in the gaining of new and greater powers.

Now we see a poor reflection; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully. I Corinthians 13:12

The next world is far superior to this one, especially for those who have lived a noble life on this plane and have pleased the Lord. For them it is so splendid, so grand and enchanting that, if they could experience it, they would no longer wish to continue to live. They would deem this world a dark and gloomy prison.

Such is the station ordained for the true believer that if to an extent smaller than a needle's eye the glory of that station were to be unveiled to mankind, every beholder would be consumed away in his longing to attain it. For this reason it hath been decreed that in this earthly life the full measure of the glory of his own station should remain concealed from the eye of such a believer.³

Bahá'u'lláh

Didst thou behold immortal sovereignty, thou wouldst strive to pass from this fleeting world. But to conceal the one from thee and to reveal the other is a mystery which none but the pure in heart can comprehend.⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

A friend asked: "How should one look forward to death?" 'Abdu'l-Bahá answered:

How does one look forward to the end of any journey? With hope and with expectation. It is even so with the end of this earthly journey.⁵

Bahá'u'lláh teaches that this realm is a place of planting, not of harvesting; hence, we should not always expect to receive the rewards of our good deeds here. He who plants a seed does not receive an instant harvest. God wishes us to show our trust in Him by being patient.

Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. Christ (John 20:29)

"A wealthy man died and went to heaven. An angel took him on a guided tour of the celestial city. He came to a beautiful mansion. 'Who lives there?' asked the wealthy man. 'Oh,' the angel answered, 'on earth he was your servant.' The rich man got excited. If his servants lived this way, think of the kind of mansion he would have. Then they came to an even more magnificent mansion. 'Who's is this?'

asked the rich man, almost overwhelmed. The angel answered, 'She spent her life teaching little children.' The rich man was really getting excited now. Finally they came to a tiny shack. It was the most modest home the rich man had ever seen. 'This is your home,' said the angel. The wealthy man began to cry. 'I'm sorry,' said the angel. 'We did all we could with what you sent us.'"

This world is a school and this life a test. If it weren't a test, we would have been subjected to binding controls and commands as are given to cats and crocodiles. Our prime purpose in the school of life is to get "a good report card."

Teacher: "Johnny, give me a sentence with a direct object."

Johnny: "Teacher, everybody thinks you're beautiful."

Teacher: "Thank you, Johnny, but what is the object?"

Johnny: "A good report card!"

In this school, we have the choice of being an honor student, a mediocre one, or a dropout. Whatever grade we receive here will be ours forever. In fact, our grade is the only thing we can carry beyond the grave. Have you ever seen anyone take gold to the grave? A man thought he could. Before his death, he told his friend, "People say you can't take anything with you, I am going to prove them wrong." Shortly before his death, he turned his wealth into cash, put the

cash in three envelopes, gave one envelope to his friend, one to his lawyer, and one to his minister. In his will he specified that when his body was lowered to the grave, the three envelopes were to be dropped on to his coffin. His will was followed...but not quite. After the man was buried, the lawyer asked the other two if they had faithfully followed the will. The dead man's friend said, "Thoughts and thanks are more precious than money. Instead of cash, I put a thank-you note in his envelope." The lawyer said that he was not so wordy. He summarized his message in only three words. He wrote, "Are you kidding?" The minister said, "You both are so untrustworthy. I wrote him a personal check for the total amount!"

Some people are quite good at gambling with the gifts of life. They act like a man who went to a casino in a \$50,000 Cadillac and returned on a \$350,000 bus!

We are worth not as much as we have but as much as we are.

Most people spend their lives in pursuit of pleasures and possessions. The promise of paradise does not move them. They work hard for ephemeral palaces on earth, but not for eternal mansions in paradise. They devote their energies to be at the top of their graduating class in this world—a glamorous illusion that endures for but a little while and then vanishes. But when it comes to graduating from this

world, their standards go down. "A student rushed into the office of his faculty advisor just after mid-terms, 'I need help!' The professor asked, 'What's your trouble?' The student replied, 'I got an F in science, an F in math, and a D in geography.' 'Well, what's your explanation for that?' asked the professor. The student replied, 'I think I spent too much time on geography!'"

Sacred Scriptures assure us that no learning however small, no act however insignificant, will be lost, that the One who has made the universe can certainly preserve our deeds and reward us accordingly.

And if anyone gives a cup of cold water to one of these little ones...I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.

Christ (Matt. 10:42)

Again, those who have had near-death visions indicate that:

- Death does not destroy the self, its sense of individuality, identity, or consciousness.
- The soul enters a new spiritual dimension, indescribable in its beauty and perfection.
- Physical pain and infirmity (blindness, deafness, etc.) disappear.
- The soul gains new gifts and powers, like the freedom to travel throughout the universe without any instrument, and to pass through physical barriers.

- The soul remembers and reviews all the events of its life, including caring or uncaring acts.
- There is some kind of evaluation of one's life.
- The soul has a chance to meet loved ones who have died.
- The individual returns with a sense of purpose and meaning for this life. He or she learns that the most critical goal in life is to love and to learn—to love all humanity (not just one's family members) and to seek knowledge.⁶

The following are a few brief quotes from people who have had near-death visions:

"All pain vanished." "There was a feeling of utter peace and quiet, no fear at all." "After I came back, I cried off and on for about a week because I had to live in this world after seeing that one." "It opened up a whole new world for me...I kept thinking, 'There's so much that I've got to find out.'" "I heard a voice telling me what I had to do—go back—and I felt no fear."⁷

Bahá'í sacred writings on the afterlife are abundant. Here is an excerpt from Bahá'u'lláh's works:

Thou hast asked Me concerning the nature of the soul. Know, verily, that the soul is a sign of God, a heavenly gem whose reality the most learned of men hath failed to grasp, and whose mystery no mind,

however acute, can ever hope to unravel. It is the first among all created things to declare the excellence of its Creator, the first to recognize His glory, to cleave to His truth, and to bow down in adoration before Him. If it be faithful to God, it will reflect His light, and will, eventually, return unto Him. If it fail, however, in its allegiance to its Creator, it will become a victim to self and passion, and will, in the end, sink in their depths.

Whoso hath, in this Day, refused to allow the doubts and fancies of men to turn him away from Him Who is the Eternal Truth, and hath not suffered the tumult provoked by the ecclesiastical and secular authorities to deter him from recognizing His Message, such a man will be regarded by God, the Lord of all men, as one of His mighty signs, and will be numbered among them whose names have been inscribed by the Pen of the Most High in His Book. Blessed is he that hath recognized the true stature of such a soul, that hath acknowledged its station, and discovered its virtues.⁸

In this world we see only the visible. Sometimes we doubt that we will ever enjoy the fruits of our labor. "One cold February day a snail started climbing an apple tree. As he inched slowly upward, a worm stuck its head from a crevice in the tree to offer some advice: 'You're wasting your

energy. There isn't a single apple up there.' The snail kept up his slow climb. 'There will be when I get there,' he said."

Among the most beloved and blessed attributes in the sight of God is patience. Those who endure the unpleasant with resignation will receive "the choicest gifts:"

Say, this earthly life shall come to an end, and everyone shall expire and return unto my Lord God Who will reward with the choicest gifts the deeds of those who endure with patience. Verily thy God assigneth the measure of all created things as He willeth, by virtue of His behest; and those who conform to the good-pleasure of your Lord, they are indeed among the blissful.⁹ The Báb

We all know we can never get out of this world "alive." And yet we live as if we will. Life is a journey; we must consistently set goals and move on. What matters is not where we started but how far we have traveled. Our life is like a taxi ride. Whether we go anywhere or not, the meter keeps ticking. Sooner or later our earthly ride hits a dead end. And the ticking taxi has no reverse gears.

O CHILDREN OF NEGLIGENCE!

Set not your affections on mortal sovereignty and rejoice not therein. Ye are even as the unwary bird that with full confidence warbleth upon the bough; till of a sudden the fowler Death throws it upon the

dust, and the melody, the form and the color are gone, leaving not a trace. Wherefore take heed, O bondslaves of desire!¹⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

All sacred Scriptures encourage us to take advantage of the opportunities we have in this life to advance spiritually. While here, on our journey towards God, we can advance in one instant as much as a thousand years. This will never again be possible. The most critical feature of this world among all the worlds of God is this: It sets the pace for everything that follows throughout all eternity. We are asked a thousand times and more to seize the moment before it is gone forever:

Seize your chance...inasmuch as a fleeting moment in this Day excelleth centuries of a bygone age ...Neither sun nor moon hath witnessed a day such as this.¹¹

Bahá'u'lláh

Hear and pay attention, do not be arrogant, for the Lord has spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God before he brings the darkness, before your feet stumble on the darkening hills. You hope for light but he will turn it to thick darkness and change it to deep gloom.

Jeremiah 13:15-16

This is My counsel unto thee and unto the beloved of God. Whosoever wisheth, let him turn thereunto; whosoever wisheth, let him turn away. God, verily, is independent of him and of that which he may see and witness.¹² Bahá'u'lláh

This is what the Sovereign Lord says. Whoever will listen let him listen, and whoever will refuse let him refuse. Ezekiel 3:27

O MOVING FORM OF DUST!

I desire communion with thee, but thou wouldst put no trust in Me...At all times I am near unto thee, but thou art ever far from Me. Imperishable glory I have chosen for thee, yet boundless shame thou hast chosen for thyself. While there is yet time, return, and lose not thy chance.¹³ Bahá'u'lláh

This day I call heaven and earth as witness...that I have set before you life and death...Now choose life...the Lord is your life... Deuteronomy 3:19-20

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. Revelation 22:17

This world is a theater, where each of us presents a concert. All the days of our lives should be devoted to tuning our instruments and practicing so that we can offer our heavenly Beloved the sweetest melody. The state of the soul upon its departure is our final melody. Once that moment has passed, we will not have any chance of returning for a second concert.

As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. Christ (John 9:4)

The earth is not our permanent home. We must enjoy this life and live it to its fullest but remain detached. Nothing is ours. We don't even own ourselves:

Every living soul belongs to Me. Ezekiel 18:4

As the Bahá'í burial ring reads:

We are God's and to Him shall we return.¹⁴

This world is a ladder, not a lazy chair. It was not made for resting, but for reaching spiritual perfection. This planet is a place of learning and growing, not of lying idle. Even if we own the whole world, we must let go in the end. An old woman was hospitalized for a long time. She longed to be released from the hospital and to return home. Her wish was finally fulfilled, but not the way she expected. One day both her doctor and priest came to see her at the same time. She thought that this was the day of her release. The priest told her, "I have good news for you. You are such a wonderful person that your home is heaven." Her doctor said, "I have a bit of bad news, you will make the trip this Friday!"

Here is a piece of poetry from a small book titled *A Messenger of Joy*, about the afterlife:

O my beloved friends! Gather blossoms of joy while you may. Hang your troubles upon the trees, and cast your cares to the wind.

Banish the night with your love, wake the dawn with your praise.

Sing and dance and be merry, but know there are other songs to sing.

Live, but do not cling to your lives. Own, but do not be attached to your possessions.

Cherish your pearls and rubies, let them dazzle your eyes, but know they are not yours. They belong to earth.

Celebrate life, but be ready to depart the moment the banquet ends.

When life bids you farewell, and death greets you, embrace her with open arms.¹⁵

Heaven is our great hope and our everlasting home. Some years ago a beautiful young actress was killed by a stalker in California. I saw the mother of the actress testify in the court. I heard her make this statement, "I wish I'd believed in heaven. Then I would know that I have a beautiful daughter in heaven. But I don't believe. And this creates this absence." There is a vacuum for heaven in every heart. Unless that vacuum is filled, life remains empty.

Although we know our Creator will reward us for good deeds, that should not be the reason for doing good. Dependency on rewards is a sign of immaturity. Children sometimes eat their dinner in the hope of getting a dessert. A mature person eats dinner for sheer enjoyment and health. To a spiritually

advanced person, a good deed is its own reward. Anyone who is in harmony with God lives in heaven on earth.

Those souls that, in this day, enter the divine kingdom and attain everlasting life, although materially dwelling on earth, yet in reality soar in the realm of heaven. Their bodies may linger on earth but their spirits travel in the immensity of space.¹⁶ 'Abdu'l-Bahá

One way we can predict our spiritual position hereafter, as permanent residents in heaven, is to see how we have related to God and His creatures here as passing residents of the earth. Our Creator observes a simple rule of justice: He will treat us the way we treat Him and His creation. For instance, if we forgive others, He will forgive us; if we love Him, He will love us; if we are for Him, He will be for us; if we ignore His presence in His latest Manifestation or Messenger, He will ignore us; if we feel ashamed of the One He sends to save us, He will be ashamed of us:

Whoever is ashamed of Me and My words...of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father [Glory of God]. Christ (Mark 8:38)

God will verily do unto them that which they themselves are doing, and will forget them even as they have ignored His Presence in His day. Such is His decree unto those

that have denied Him, and such will it be unto them that have rejected His signs.¹⁷ Bahá'u'lláh

By using this simple standard of “mutual treatment” here as citizens of the earthly kingdom, we can almost predict the state of our souls hereafter as citizens of the heavenly Kingdom.

Our Creator teaches us that this world is only a theater in which we choose the roles we prefer to play. To live in a physical world, we need and are given a physical form to carry us around. But the things that really matter are all invisible, spiritual. For the sake of observing the principle of diversity, the physical gifts are not equally distributed. But the spiritual gifts are put within the reach of every human being. No one is spiritually handicapped. No one can excuse himself by saying, “My father hated me, so I hated everybody else!” We are creatures of our cultures, but the masters of our souls. In God’s sight, what matters is what is possible. *When we sincerely make an effort, when we listen and act without resorting to self-deception and excuses, His love enfolds us like a rainbow, His grace lifts us to the heavens on high.*

Belief in the afterlife and a constant awareness of our mortality elevates our perspective more than anything else. This is how one professor transforms his students’ perspective:

The death of a loved one, a severe illness, a financial setback, or ex-

treme adversity can cause us to stand back, look at our lives, and ask ourselves some hard questions: “What’s really important? Why am I doing what I’m doing?”...“Assume you only have this one semester to live,” I tell my students, “and that during this semester you are to stay in school as a good student. Visualize how you would spend your semester.”

Things are suddenly placed in a different perspective. Values quickly surface that before weren’t even recognized.

I have also asked students to live with that expanded perspective for a week and keep a diary of their experiences.

The results are very revealing. They start writing to parents to tell them how much they love and appreciate them. They reconcile with a brother, a sister, or a friend where the relationship has deteriorated.

The dominant, central theme of their activities, the underlying principle, is love. The futility of bad-mouthing, bad thinking, put-downs, and accusation becomes very evident when they think in terms of having only a short time to live. Principles and values become more evident to everybody...

When people seriously undertake to identify what really matters most to them in their lives, what they really want to be and to do, they become

very reverent. They start to think in larger terms than today and tomorrow.¹⁸

Here is a prayer from the Bahá'í sacred Writings for the departed:

He is God, exalted is He, the Lord of loving-kindness and bounty!...

O my God! Thou seest me detached from all save Thee, holding fast unto Thee and turning unto the ocean of Thy bounty, to the heaven of Thy favor, to the Daystar of Thy grace...

O my Lord! I myself and all created things bear witness unto Thy might, and I pray Thee not to turn away from Thyself this spirit that hath ascended unto Thee, unto Thy heavenly place, Thine exalted Paradise and Thy retreats of nearness, O Thou who art the Lord of all men!

Grant, then, O my God, that Thy servant may consort with Thy chosen ones, Thy saints and Thy Messengers in heavenly places that the pen cannot tell nor the tongue recount.

O My Lord, the poor one hath verily hastened unto the Kingdom of Thy wealth, the stranger unto his home within Thy precincts, he that is sore athirst to the heavenly river of Thy bounty. Deprive him not, O Lord, from his share of the banquet of Thy grace and from the favor of Thy bounty. Thou art in truth the Almighty, the Gracious, the All-Bountiful.

O my God, Thy Trust hath been returned unto Thee. It behooveth Thy grace and Thy bounty that have compassed Thy dominions on earth and in heaven, to vouchsafe unto Thy newly welcomed one Thy gifts and Thy bestowals, and the fruits of the tree of Thy grace! Powerful art Thou to do as Thou willest, there is none other God but Thee, the Gracious, the Most Bountiful, the Compassionate, the Bestower, the Pardoner, the Precious, the All-Knowing.

I testify, O my Lord, that Thou hast enjoined upon men to honor their guest, and he that hath ascended unto Thee hath verily reached Thee and attained Thy Presence. Deal with him then according to Thy grace and bounty! By Thy glory, I know of a certainty that Thou wilt not withhold Thyself from that which Thou hast commanded Thy servants, nor wilt Thou deprive him that hath clung to the cord of Thy bounty and hath ascended to the Dayspring of Thy wealth.

There is none other God but Thee, the One, the Single, the Powerful, the Omniscient, the Bountiful.¹⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

A Mission Statement

Many authors encourage their readers to write "a mission statement." The purpose of this project is to keep us focused and on track. The statement should be typed or printed attractively and be read every day. The reason for

going through all this trouble is this: The world carries us forward like a mighty river with full force. It is so demanding, it takes every bit of energy we can muster just to stay afloat, just to cope with daily demands. The mission statement is like a tiny island in the midst of this fast-flowing river on which we can land for just a few moments every day to remind ourselves of the vast ocean at the end of the river.

"Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes once boarded a train in Washington, then promptly lost his ticket. The conductor recognized him and said, 'Never mind, Mr. Justice. When you find your ticket, I am certain you will mail it in.' 'Mr. Conductor,' replied Holmes, 'the question is not where is my ticket, but where am I supposed to be going?'"

According to author Stephen Covey, a mission statement accomplishes these purposes:

- It presents you with a circle of significance, a clear lens through which you can see the world.
- It serves as a personal constitution, as a standard by which you measure everything else in your life, as an expression of your vision and values.
- It gives you a sense of clarity, commitment, and freedom.
- It "forces you to think through your priorities deeply, carefully, and to align your behavior with your beliefs. Other people begin to

sense that you're not being driven by everything that happens to you. You have a sense of mission about what you're trying to do and you are excited about it."²⁰

It is never too late to learn and to start a new life.

Student: "I want to become a doctor."

Counselor: "Why don't you?"

Student: "It takes seven years. I will be an old man."

Counselor: "How old will you be in seven years if you *don't* go to school?"

It is possible to learn as late as the hour of death:

How often hath a sinner attained, at the hour of death, to the essence of faith, and, quaffing the immortal draught, hath taken his flight unto the Concourse on high!²¹ Bahá'u'lláh

It is also possible to unlearn at the hour of death:

And how often hath a devout believer, at the hour of his soul's ascension, been so changed as to fall into the nethermost fire!²²
Bahá'u'lláh

Please take a few minutes to write a few lines or paragraphs below about what you want to accomplish most in the years and decades that are still yours. What is your most urgent purpose? What plans do you have to prepare yourself for your heavenly home? What specific steps will you take before your earthly journey is over?

If you have difficulty composing a message, here is some help. Take any sentences you like from the following example:

***My Mission in This Life,
and My Eternal Destiny
in the Life to Come***

There is a time when I must firmly choose the course I will follow, or the relentless drift of events will make all the decisions for me.

I am here as a guest; my true home is heaven. To enter, I must be clean and clothed, radiant and fragrant; otherwise I will be as bewildered and anxious as a first-grader who hesitated to go home. When the principal asked her why, she said, "Yesterday I left my expensive sweater at school. My Mommy told me not to come home without it. I don't know where she wants me to go!"

I am a spiritual being with an everlasting destiny. I am a soul with a body, not a body with a soul. I will be

on earth for only a little while, but my brief stay here is more critical in determining my future destiny than the eternity that follows it. I recognize that all the roses of heaven lie in the seeds of this life.

My eternal home is heaven. My main mission in this life is to prepare my soul for that home. A consequence of that preparation is the profoundest and most enduring sense of fulfillment and happiness in this life.

What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?
Christ (Mark 8:36)

What would it profit man, if he were to fail to recognize the Revelation of God? Nothing whatever. To this Mine own Self, the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, the All-Wise, will testify.²³ Bahá'u'lláh

The time to choose the course of my spiritual destiny is now.

Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near.
Isaiah 55:6

Therefore let everyone...pray to You while You may be found; surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach Him. Psalms 32:4-6

In my life God comes first, before my loved ones and me. My best moments are those devoted to God. Every day I will set aside at least half an hour to know God, to love Him, and to glorify Him. I will not allow worldly concerns or selfish desires take my attention

away from my responsibility to God and to all humanity. I will pray for His guidance every day.

I have total control over my choices. I do not have to follow the prejudices and untested assumptions of my ancestors. Conformity is a root cause of all evil. I will not let my spiritual destiny hang either on the wheel of chance, on my birth to my parents, on public opinion, on tradition, on conformity to authority figures, or on what my friends and relatives think.

I will use no excuses to avoid my responsibility to God, to myself, and to humankind:

I am involved in all mankind; and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.
John Donne

I will set aside a little time every day to pray to God and to ask Him to guide me by the light of His knowledge.

O God! Refresh and gladden my spirit. Purify my heart. Illumine my powers. I lay all my affairs in Thy hand. Thou art my Guide and my Refuge...

O God! Thou art more friend to me than I am to myself. I dedicate myself to Thee, O Lord.²⁴
'Abdu'l-Bahá

Is there any Remover of difficulties save God? Say: Praised be God! He is God! All are His servants, and all abide by His bidding!²⁵ The Báb

Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.

You are God my stronghold. Why have you rejected me? Why must I go about mourning...? Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell. Psalms 25:4-5; 43:2-3

1. *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 157.
2. *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 148.
3. Shoghi Effendi. *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1980, p. 108.
4. *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* (Persian), no. 41.
5. Motlagh, Hushidar. *The Chalice of Immortality*, New Delhi, India: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1978, p. 114.
6. Ring, Kenneth. *Life at Death*, New York: Quill, 1982.
7. Moody, Raymond A. *Life After Life*, New York: Bantam Books, 1975, p. i.
8. Motlagh, Hushidar. *Unto Him Shall We Return*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1985, p. 6.
9. *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 161.
10. *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* (Persian), no. 75.
11. Shoghi Effendi. *The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh*, Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1947, p. 15.
12. *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 23-24.
13. *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* (Persian), no. 21.

14. *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 252.

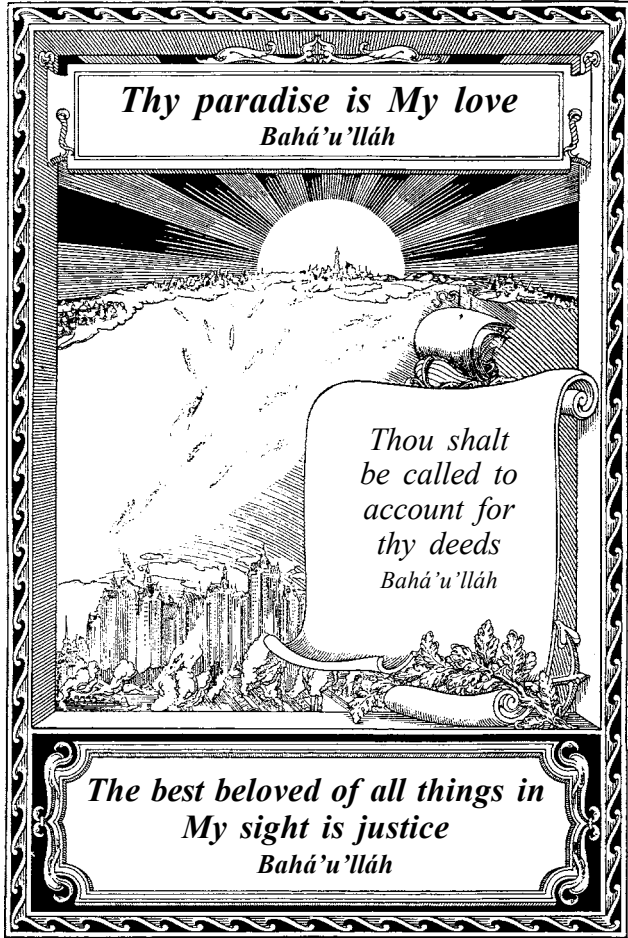
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Thy paradise is My love
Bahá'u'lláh

*Thou shalt
be called to
account for
thy deeds*
Bahá'u'lláh

*The best beloved of all things in
My sight is justice*
Bahá'u'lláh